



## What is an ELSA?

An ELSA is an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant. ELSAs are trained in many areas from emotional literacy to active listening and are regularly supervised by Educational Psychologists. ELSAs support children's emotional development to help them to understand their emotions and respect the feelings of those around them. They understand the barriers to learning that some children might have and can help them with this.

## What is an ELSA's scope of practice?

It is important that ELSAs work within their scope of practice and only cover things they are trained to cover. Any concerns out of their scope of practice should be discussed with their Educational Psychologist and/or referred on to outside agencies. An ELSA is not there to fix problems but to help children to find their own solutions and offer important support to them. ELSA sessions about creating a safe and reflective space for the child.

## What areas does an ELSA help with?

- Loss and bereavement
- Emotional Literacy
- Self-esteem
- Social Skills
- Friendship issues
- Relationships
- Managing strong feelings
- Anxiety and worries
- Bullying
- Conflict
- Emotional Regulation
- Growth Mindset
- Social and therapeutic stories
- Problem solving

## How are children or young people referred for ELSA?

- Class teacher referral
- SENDCo referral
- Outside agency referral

Please be aware that new or different behaviours are in fact normal for children. They will go through behaviour phases, which is a natural part of their development.

## How long should an ELSA Intervention last?

ELSA intervention should be short-term with clear aims. Usually an intervention lasts 6-8 weeks.

Clear programme aims (SMART targets) are set early on and each session has an objective – something the ELSA wants to help the pupil understand or achieve. Children respond well to boundaries and rules.

It is important to have a period of no ELSA input following the end of an ELSA intervention, as the child needs to digest the learnt information and put it into practice. Children need to have time to develop independence around the learnt skills.

For pupils with complex or long-term needs, it is unrealistic to expect ELSA support to resolve all their difficulties. Change is a long-term process that needs everyone's help.

## **What does a typical ELSA session look like?**

The sessions starts with a welcome for the child along with an emotional check in. How do they feel today?

Next, a warm up or icebreaker game is played.

The main activity follows, where the ELSA will teach something to help the pupil with their target. The ELSA will also review learning from the previous session, and check if the child has used the skill taught.

The session finishes with a relaxation exercise to help the child prepare for class, and a quick review on what the child has learnt that session. At this point, the ELSA may ask the child to do something for next time, e.g. practise star breathing when feeling angry.

## **What can I expect as a parent?**

As a parent, you can expect your child to receive personalised emotional support from an ELSA once a week in school. You will be informed that this intervention is taking place but the ELSA cannot discuss what your child says in the sessions unless it is in the interest of the child's welfare. ELSA is a safe, secure space for your child to open up about their thoughts and feelings, the ELSA wants them to feel supported and safe with the knowledge that ELSA is separate from home.

It is okay if a child does not want to talk to you about what they have been doing in their ELSA sessions, they will open up in their own time. Create a safe, secure space and let your child come to you in their own time.

## **Other resources**

Young Minds - <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/>

NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/mental-health-support/supporting-a-child-or-young-person/>

Suffolk Mind - <https://www.suffolkmind.org.uk/who-we-help/working-with-children-and-young-people/resources-to-support-children-and-young-people/>

NSPCC - <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-health-development/child-mental-health>

Barnardo's - <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/get-support/support-for-parents-and-carers/mental-health>

Family Line - <https://family-action.org.uk/get-support/familyline/>

Suffolk School Nursing Team - <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/childrens-health/school-nursing-service>